

How they dug the Wabash & Erie

TS FEB 4 1979

Historically Speaking

By Dorothy Clark



The construction of the Wabash & Erie Canal, and the hopes and ambitions the enterprise aroused, the failures and disappointments experienced, is all a part of the history of the Wabash Valley.

Along the meandering course of the canal, several towns were located, and there was quite a demand for town lots, the price of real estate in the vicinity of the canal route materially increasing.

Some of these towns were laid out on a large scale; several houses were built, including stores, and small industries of various kinds were established. During the short time the canal was in operation, some of the towns became extensive shipping points for grain and produce, and the merchants located there enjoyed a large trade from the surrounding country.

But all the bright prospects and promising financial investments went glimmering when the canal failed. The site of some of these once flourishing towns is now hardly a memory. The thousands of dollars expended by the different counties in the canal project was compensated, in some measure, however, by the bringing in of a large immigration and the consequent development of the material resources of the counties.

The amount of labor and patient energy expended in the digging of the canal is a wonder to the present age. That was before the day of the diesel-powered earth-movers and other modern machinery for such work, and all excavating work was done by pick and shovel.

Irish laborers were mostly employed for this work, as they were the most expert in handling the implements used. The dirt was loaded into a wheelbarrow, or a dump cart drawn by a mule, and carried to the place of dumping. The plow and scraper were used to some extent by a few of the

contractors; but most of the work in the construction of that great ditch was the slow process outlined above.

A very important and necessary job was that of the "jigger boy," second only to the paymaster with the canal diggers. The "jigger" was about two swallows of whiskey, and the number of "jiggers" that a contractor would give a day to his employees was as important a consideration as the amount of money he would give for labor.

One dollar per day was the usual pay, and the number of "jiggers" was fixed by agreement, five to ten a day being the usual allowance. It was not unusual for a contractor who was short of hands to increase the number of daily "jiggers" over the allowance by other contractors. This increase brought the contractor all the hands he needed.

It was the duty of the "jigger boy" to see that the agreed number and specified amount was delivered on time. Contractors bought whiskey by the barrel, at about 20 cents per gallon, so the "jigger" was not an expensive luxury in those times.

After the canal was completed, many of the Irish emigrants had saved up enough money to buy land and bring over their families, if they had not already done so.

Laborers lived in rude shanties, sometimes cooking their own meals. Others obtained meals from boarding houses that were established at every "dump." The rations usually consisted of bread, potatoes, and plenty of black coffee, sweetened with

molasses. Meat was on the menu about once a week. The laborers received their wages every three months. Pay day was the occasion for a holiday, in which drunks and fights were the principal amusements.

In most cases, the contractors had one section each, and these sections, as a rule, were a mile long. Where the sections required heavy work they were made shorter, in order that the work might all be completed about the same time.

The embankments were made by hauling the dirt in one-horse carts. The usual outfit for a crew of men, where the haul was not over 200 yards, was four carts and four men to each cart to shovel in the dirt. The work was so timed that the loaded cart was ready to pull out as soon as an empty cart was returned to be loaded. Over each squad of 40 men there was a boss; usually the most

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portant man on the works, the boss
no opportunities escape to magni-
his office.

There were no restrictions then on
e sale of intoxicating liquor.
hiskey was as free as water, and
ten more easily obtained than wa-
r. There was great opportunity for
profitable business in setting up a
grocery" or "doggerly," as drinking
laces were called, in the vicinity of
e canal works.

A board shanty and a barrel of
hiskey was all the preparation nec-
ssary to equip a business place of
his kind. As a rule, contractors ob-
ected to establishments of this kind
because of the demoralizing effects
among their employees, and they
would not permit whiskey joints to
remain within their jurisdiction.

The canal followed the water-level
of rivers as far as practicable. In
many places the fall was so great that
it was necessary to build locks in
order to secure a new water-level.

The locks were made of sufficient
length to accomodate the largest
boats, and were about 18 feet wide.
The material used was heavy hewn
timber, with very heavy double gates
at each level. American laborers
were employed in the building of
locks, culverts and construction work
where timber was required. Irish
skill was better adapted to the han-
dling of a shovel than the broadaxe.

The canal was tested upon comple-
tion by letting in the water to dis-
cover if there were any leaks. Boats
began running in the early 1850s as
soon as sections were completed and
continued until 1860s, when naviga-
tion was suspended and the canal was
practically abandoned except for a
few short sections under local control
due to railroad competition. The
motive power was mules, two or
more mules being hitched tandem for
the heavy freighters. Horses were
used in some sections of the towpath.

Wabash & Erie Canals Canalization of the Wabash — the first time

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By Dorothy Clark



Various proposals were made, and the General Assembly passed an act permitting private capital to go on with the works but the conditions attached did not appeal to men like Rose, Blake, Deming, Gilbert and others to whom the canal meant a profitable outlet for grain and merchandise and lower costs on both incoming and outgoing freight and these efforts failed.

Eastern capitalists who had invested in the bonds as well as English and other foreign investors finally got together and appointed Charles Butler to deal with the state in an effort to complete the canal so that there would be some return on their money or to arrange a settlement of their claims. Many plans were proposed, but there was little hope that the state could pay the bonds so liberally issued or that the canal could be completed by the state so as to earn dividends.

Butler finally took over most of the construction under an agreement that he would finance its completion and operation. He was to receive a part of the tolls and earnings and in various ways the canal was again started, the Cross-Cut finished as well as the extension from Lafayette.

But by the time the traffic started on the system, the railroads began to cut into the shipments and earnings fell off due to competition, not only in rates but in sure and speedy transportation. Not only did the revenue diminish but the expenses increased and the whole affair crumbled into ruin.

Two canal boats, the E.A. Hannegan and the G.R. Walker, arrived at Terre Haute on Oct. 25, 1849. On June 5, 1850, the first boat

Sometimes it takes me ages to find something I'm searching for in back issues of local newspapers. I often think newspapers only become interesting when they're turning yellow. I can get hung up on out-of-date advertisements, obituaries, headlines and vital statistics and forget what I started to look up.

The canal movement in 1837 was probably the most ambitious plan to move produce from the farm lands to the eastern and southern markets.

The original plan of the Wabash & Erie Canal was to reach the mouth of the Tippecanoe river, supposed to be the head of navigation of the Wabash and a branch was to take off near Peru and run south to Indianapolis and on to meet the White river at Worthington.

When it was found that no steamboat could reach the Tippecanoe at the height of the summer, it was planned to terminate at Lafayette. The needs of Terre Haute and vicinity were to be filled by a cross-cut canal from here to Point Commerce, but this also came under the spell of financial stringency and was abandoned for a time.

Work was done on both routes but stopped after the project came near ruining the credit of the state. On May 25, 1837, William Wines and company were advertising in the Terre Haute papers for 150 men to work on the summit level ten miles from Terre Haute. They were to be paid \$20 a month with board or \$1 a day and board themselves. Good fare and punctual payments were promised, and a lot of work had been done when the money ran out.

Terre Haute business men, millers, farmers and all interested in the completion of the canal, met frequently in an effort to get the Cross-Cut canal finished despite the failure of the state.

from Terre Haute reached Point Commerce. On Oct. 4, 1853, the Pennsylvania passed from Terre Haute to Evansville. Two months later the entire line from Toledo to the Ohio river was in operation.

The canal was at all times subject to damage by floods in the spring and winter, was often delayed in resuming traffic in the spring until the cream of the trade in grain or manufactured goods that it had waited for it to open after winter had caused it to suspend, had taken other means to get to market and the tendency of the railroads to make lower rates in summer than in winter hurt as badly as the cost of repairs themselves.

With the first boat reaching Terre Haute in October, 1849, there was but little shipping that fall and the operation of the 1850 season, while a profitable season for the north followed, it was not until June that traffic began to the south.

Then with but two years of good business as far as income went, the railroad from Terre Haute to Indianapolis afforded an outlet to the Ohio river by the Madison Road.

Meanwhile, the Wabash carried a great deal of traffic almost all year round. The latter was not to be overlooked as an important competitor. The "great boat" of 1854 was 150 feet long, 23½ feet wide, and carried 395 tons of freight, 5,730 sacks of corn, containing 13,950 bushels. While an ordinary boxcar can handle much more than that quantity, the railroads of the day needed a small train to handle it. Even as late as 1890, there were many ten-ton cars in use.

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The section of the canal between here and Lafayette was in some cases built on the very banks of the Wabash, and was often subject to being ruined by high water. The aqueduct that carried it over Spring Creek was only 10½ feet above low water and the Wabash was often as much as 20 feet above low water mark.

From Raccoon Creek to near Spring Creek the river washed the bluff and the bank of the canal was practically in the river itself. From Raccoon to Terre Haute was a continuous level, the lock there being the last on the line.

A break in this section in 1861 delayed traffic in August, the busiest season of shipping, as low water in the river usually prevented the steamboats running. A break just above town once washed out a hole ten feet below the bed of the canal, while the cutting of the bank of the reservoir in Clay County was almost the last straw.

Operation was finally given up as a failure to the north in 1869, while it ceased altogether to the south a few years earlier. The canal bed through town was finally used for the construction of our first sewer, then covered over.

The life and death of the Wabash & Erie Canal forms another chapter in the life of Terre Haute and its mention is found in many places.

In 1850, an Englishman gentleman, named Beste, and his family, came over from England, and, like all visitors to America before the Civil War, they had to make a tour of the West.

They reached Indianapolis, traveling by river and rail, and after remaining there for some time, bought a team of horses and a spring wagon and proceeded by the National Road to Terre Haute.

Because of sickness, they were

detained here for several months. They then decided to abandon their contemplated trip to St. Louis in the wagon and return by the Wabash & Erie Canal, which was then in operation.

The following is an extract from a

sketch written by Mr. Beste:

"At five o'clock in the afternoon, we stepped from the little quay at Terre Haute on board the Indiana canal boat. Three horses were harnessed to a rope, about 50 yards ahead of the boat. They started at a

moderate trot, and the town where we had tarried so long was soon lost to sight. No other passengers were on board, and we wandered over the vessel well pleased with the promise it gave us of tolerable accomodation. The captain, a very young man, was civil and attentive to our wants, and told us that tea would be served at seven o'clock, which there, on that day, was the precise hour of sunset."

A detailed description of the canal boat and its accomodations was included in Beste's account which continues:

"We were summoned to tea, but after the good living at the Prairie House (Terre Haute House now), all

complained of the bad tea and coffee, of the hot, heavy cornbread, and of the raw beefsteak.

"After tea we all began a most murderous attack upon the mosquitoes that swarmed on the windows and inside our berths, in expectation of feasting upon us as soon as we should go to bed. But those on whom we made war were soon replaced by others, and the more we killed the more they seemed to come to be killed, like Mrs. Bond's ducks; it was as though they would defy us to exterminate them. At last we gave up the task as hopeless and resigned ourselves, as well as we could, to pass a sleepless night."

Wabash and Erie Canal

TERRE HAUTE, IND.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 1981

threat, et al

More about the Canal, Lockport, murder

The original concept of a canal 25 miles between the Maumee and the mouth of Little River evolved into the larger plan of a canal between Lake Erie and the head of navigation on the Wabash River. Some dreamers wanted the canal to go all the way to the Ohio River.

The Wabash-Maumee gradually became the Wabash and Erie Canal. The congressional donation of 621 acres was inadequate, so a section of land for each mile of canal was requested. While everyone waited for congressional action, land speculators were busy and towns were platted on the proposed canal route. Some flourished, some existed only on paper, and some evolved over the years after the canal was gone into rural small towns — like Lockport, which is now the town of Riley.

On July 4, 1825, ceremonies at Licking Summit, Ohio, inaugurated the cutting of the Ohio & Erie Canal from Maumee Bay to Cincinnati. There were speeches, toasts, artillery firing, parades, a banquet, and finally Governor Clinton of New York and Governor Morrow of Ohio manned the shovels while 10,000 spectators cheered.

Among interested spectators who managed to shake hands with the famous New York visitor, and to receive a few words of fatherly counsel from the great man, was a 17-year-old rodman in the Ohio engineering corps named Jesse Lynch Williams. Seven years later he became the engineer of the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Late in 1825 the whole 362 miles of the Erie Canal was opened with month-long festivities never before (or since) seen in the nation. The sustained enthusiasm of the Erie Canal celebration was unique. The

whole country was impressed and word began to trickle back to the remote Indiana counties where Hoosier canal affairs stood still.

John Tipton, celebrated Indian fighter, veteran of the Tippecanoe campaign, former member of the legislature, one of the surveyors of the Indiana-Illinois boundary, and one of the commissioners who had chosen the site of Indianapolis, was chosen to preside at a mass meeting in Fort Wayne to ask the federal government to survey and locate a line between the Maumee and the Wabash.

Described as a sinewy man of medium height, with stiff sandy hair and stern gray eyes, a hard drinker and blunt speaker, Tipton was as tough a frontier specimen as Indiana produced, a dogged combatant who relished any kind of battle.

He was a politician adept at sensing public opinion and at being on the popular side, by mental acrobatics if necessary. Tipton was also a canny entrepreneur combining public service and private profit in shrewd land deals.

As Indian agent at Fort Wayne, Tipton probably knew more about the Pottawatomies and Miamis than anybody else. He owned 8,600 acres of land that would become more valuable if transversed by a canal.

The governor at that time was James Brown Ray, one of the most pompous, egocentric and irascible men in Hoosier history. He was one of the several sons of Revolutionary War veteran, William Ray, who is buried near Riley.

The stories about Gov. Ray are legion, his fist fights and brawls, his threat to murder his wife, his dramatic last-minute pardoning of a convicted murder waiting to be hung with the noose around his neck, and his eccentric habit of writing words in the air with his cane as he walked

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along the streets.

These were the men who fought for the Wabash & Erie Canal in its early stages of planning. Ray was reared in Riley Township, Vigo County.

In March, 1827, Congress granted land to Indiana equal to half of five sections on each side of a canal route, every alternate section to be reserved to the United States. This generous

donation amounted to 527,271.24 acres in a strip five miles wide and about 160 miles long from the mouth of the Tippecanoe River on the Wabash to the mouth of Auglaize River on the Maumee.

The law stipulated that the canal be commenced within five years, completed in 20 years, and that it be toll-free for all uses by the federal government.

Surveys showed that excessive lockage would not be necessary as there was a gradual fall of 220 feet in 112 miles. Puzzled Indians were told of the plans to build a canal, or artificial river. One brave commented, "Can't do it; won't rain enough to fill it; white man a fool; the Great Spirit made the rivers."

In after years, summer droughts parched the midwest, grounded the canal boats, and the unfilled channel confirmed the opinion of old Chapine.

Gov. Ray continued to advocate railroad building instead of canal building but was considered "silly, if not traitorous." Hindsight always sees more clearly than foresight, but now we see his opinions would have saved the state much storm and

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stress.

The allotted five years ended March, 1832, Noah Noble was governor. The legislature argued and introduced bills; amended, argued some more, and finally passed a comprehensive act on Jan. 9, 1832. People eager for the canal celebrated all over the state.

However, the canal victory was won at a price. The legislature also chartered eight railroad companies, five of which proposed to build lines between Indianapolis and the Ohio River. No one saw this as prophetic, and the vocal majority prevailed.

The story of the Wabash and Erie Canal and its ups and downs that involved local people and changed the maps of the area will be continued in future columns.

along . . . '

'Legions dug by hand as the big ditch inched

This column continues the story of the Wabash & Erie Canal

Legions of workers, Irish, German and Yankee, dug by hand the long channel of the Wabash and Erie Canal. The big ditch inched along — by arduous shoveling and carting not much improved over the primitive methods of ancient Egypt. Skilled masons laid the stones of the locks and remnants of their work still stand in a few locations.

"Thousands of men, nameless now and forgotten, labored, fought and caroused, and by the thousands they died, unhonored and unsung, leaving the Wabash and Erie as a transitory monument to human endeavor, stated Paul Fatout in his book "Indiana Canals."

Below Terre Haute, nature caused most of the trouble in putting the canal out of action. Thoughtless people were also to blame. Traffic was too light to justify full-time lock-tenders, so boatmen locked themselves through, sometimes failing to close lock gates, and thus drained the level.

Sometimes logs and timber blocks were rolled into the channel and were a menace to navigation. The packet

Visitor ran hard against a submerged obstruction that stove a hole in her hull and sank her.

One breach in a bank was no sooner repaired than another occurred. Careless supervision, cheap construction and fraudulent contractors were blamed for building banks by piling earth on logs and brushwood. Banks made this way would not hold, but those honestly made of earth according to specifications didn't always hold either.

Seepage eroded and undermined. The south abutment of the Prairie Creek aqueduct settled so deeply into the mud that the structure collapsed. The trustees sometimes wished that the ditch had never been dug below Terre Haute. Dowling's letters to Charles Butler reported little other than trouble.

In the spring of 1854, torrential rains raised a flood that wrecked the Sugar Creek aqueduct, damaged another at Raccoon Creek, stopped navigation for about four months, and cost \$11,000 for rebuilding.

This allowed the packet *Marion* to sail in mid-June all the way from Terre Haute to Evansville. The *Prairie Queen* and *Pride of the Wabash* made sporadic trips to Terre

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Haute and return, although they carried few passengers. The toll collector reported only \$2,361.12 for the entire year.

Above Terre Haute, grass grew so lushly in the canal that two marine mowers with 12 scythes could scarcely keep it down. Like a lawn, the canal bed had to be shorn half a dozen times a summer. Once cut, the stuff created a new problem by lodging in lock paddle gates, preventing their fitting tightly and causing water leakage.

The situation was bad enough without the antagonism of Clay County guerillas who objected to the Birch Creek reservoir, considered dangerous to health because of its standing timber.

When an injunction to stop construction was denied, they reacted in

mob fashion by cutting a gap of a hundred feet in the reservoir bank, releasing a thousand acres of water ten feet deep and drying up the canal for ten miles.

The trustees agreed to remove the timber, but not satisfied, the belligerents twice set fire to the long wooden waste weir and tried to burn the Eel River dam, one of the most costly structures on the line.

When the trustees appealed to the governor for aid, he issued a proclamation offering a reward of \$500 for the apprehension of offenders. Clay County hostiles rudely tore down his posters and tacked up their own proclamations, offering the same reward for the apprehension of "Old Joe Wright."

The conflict, a preview of 20th

(over)

century violence, was as irrational as other episodes of canal warfare. "A detached observer," said Fatout, "can only puzzle over the strange spectacle of supposedly law-abiding citizens, including this time at least one member of the state assembly taking the law into their own hands, advocating disorder and, obstinate rejecting compromise, deliberately injuring their neighbors and themselves."

In May, 1855, they marched forth again to put the quietus on installations at Birch Creek. In broad daylight, 100 armed vandals with blackened faces drove workmen away and cut reservoir banks, then wrecked the aqueduct and burned all buildings in the neighborhood.

When the governor dispatched a

company of militia, under command of General Dodd, it was reinforced by about 50 armed volunteer guards from Evansville. Spoiling for a fight, the volunteers came up, wetly, on a half-water-logged flatboat, marched ten miles and slept on straw, all in campaign style befitting maneuvers in enemy country. Civil war seemed imminent, but no battle occurred.

The natives were docile while sentries patrolled and while the general arrested 17 men for arson and malicious trespass, all were later released. Then after workmen had restored the reservoir and troops had withdrawn, depredations began once more. The destruction ended navigation below Terre Haute for the rest of the season.

How Indiana got out of the canal business

Historically
Speaking

By Dorothy Clark

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Have you ever wondered just how the State of Indiana managed to get out of the financial mess caused by the building of the Wabash and Erie Canal? Most people know that the bankruptcy of the state canal caused the General Assembly to pass legislation forbidding the state to ever go into debt again.

Paul Fatout's book "Indiana Canals" tells it like it was in great detail. Under a variety of pressures, the legislature of 1858-59 took action on the matter.

"Disowned by the state, looked at askance by bondholders, the Wabash and Erie was a rejected child becoming more ragged by the month," said Fatout. "The year of 1857 repeated the depressing cycle of floods, breaks, drouth, another uprising of Clay County rebels cutting the bank at Eel River, and staggering expenses, the worst troubles occurring, as usual, on the white elephant of the southern division. During only two months out of 18 had the canal been navigable from Evansville to Toledo."

"Below Terre Haute bushes and briars clogged the unused towpath, which for weeks on end showed not one hoofprint of a towing mule. Freight moved in such dribblets down there that receipts were about one-fifth of the more than \$40,000 spent on repairs. On the whole line tolls dropped below those of 1856, and for the first time in years expenditures exceeded income."

Resident trustee Thomas Dowling of Terre Haute was deluged with complaints and gloomy news. He was attacked upon his trusteeship, his politics, personality, character, habits — almost as if the way he parted his hair and wore his hat affected his administration of canal affairs. Dowling must have been a strong man to stand up under such continual criticism and bad news.

Bondholders went to court and got an injunction against the trustees using any money other than toll receipts for repairs. This automatically forced the closing of the canal south of Terre Haute in 1858, and made it doubtful whether any part of the line could be opened in the spring of 1859.

Toll collectors were dismissed, superintendent's pay was cut by 20 percent, and all employees not strictly necessary were discharged in a valiant attempt to save funds. The legislature was asked for permission to lease the canal to private or municipal groups in order to keep it going.

From Fort Wayne to Evansville citizens held meetings to consider ways and means, and there was much ranting and raving. The long-suffering Dowling finally snapped back at the many assaults. "Receiving and disbursing for years," he said, "not less than an average of half a million dollars per annum, on a salary not half of that received by many a railroad president, on a road of 100 miles...I have never considered myself as eating the bread of idleness or as reclining on a bed of roses. I have earned all I have received."

Fatout commented, "The retort deserves applause. He had indeed earned his pay."

After the legislature of 1858-59 finally granted the trustee's request to lease to private groups, Dowling farmed out the whole line. In the north, the Wabash and Erie Canal Company composed of five Fort Wayne men, took a four-year lease from the state line to Terre Haute.

From Terre Haute to Point Commerce, Chauncey Rose, William P. Griswold, James H. Turner and others leased for two years. Below that point, the Southern Indiana Canal Company leased to Evansville for four years.

The terms were that the trustees retain ownership and control, that lessees repair and rebuild structures as designated by the chief engineer, and that tolls be deposited to the credit of the trustees and kept as a reserve fund until termination of the contract, at which time net earnings would be turned over to lessees.

It was a noble effort, but to no avail. For a month or more in the spring the canal was in reasonably good boating order, but it did not remain so. The new officials were no more able to improve conditions than their predecessors. On the whole line, interruption and railroads reduced income for 1859 to \$48,278.10 while expenses added up to \$67,995.

Between 1860 and 1874 were years marking slow death of the W & E Canal. First to succumb was the section from Terre Haute to Newberry. Two men named Miller and Hedges volunteered to preserve 25 miles between Terre Haute and Eel River feeder dam, but the effort was short-lived.

By the fall of 1860, most of the Newberry section was abandoned. After a short time, the canal was broken by a gap of 57 unnavigable miles, channel silting up, towpath overgrown, abutments sinking, timbers rotting.

Even without violent weather the canal was still subject to slow abrasion of natural forces, or light winds and summer showers, of growing plants, burrowing crawfish, rust and shifting earth.

In May, 1860, a tornado blew trees into the channel, evildoers cut embankments at Prairie Creek aqueduct, and

Clay County mutineers drained Birch Creek reservoir. In 1861 navigation ceased for good between Newberry and Pigeon Creek.

Stagnant water became such a nuisance in Evansville the city fathers ordered the filling in of the whole channel that wound through town.

About 16 years after the first boat sailed into Terre Haute, the Wabash and Erie again stopped there, at the point it should never have gone beyond in the first place. The southern division ended with a deficit of close to one million dollars. Below Terre Haute, the ditch was a costly mistake. Above Terre Haute the eastern section held out a little longer.

The Wabash River flooded eight times during 1862-63 and again in 1867. By 1868 navigation stopped at Armiesburg, 22 miles above Terre Haute, and never resumed. Terre Haute became another former canal port.

Having died in debt for more than \$18 million, the canal was ordered to be sold. A public sale of the whole line was held at Terre Haute. The auction began Feb. 24, 1876 and attracted many bidders for a piece of what *The Express* called "The Old Ditch which winds like a serpent through the land."

The circuit court room was jammed when Judge Samuel B. Gookins, special master, read off a list of sections to be sold. Total receipts of \$160,096 were reported.

Land titles to this day still puzzle abstractors trying to establish a clear title to property on or adjacent to the old line.

By about 1882, towns on the upper line drained the channel and filled it in. Railroads and interurban right-of-ways were established in the canal bed, on its towpath and berms. The Terre Haute and South Eastern Railroad took over the canal property in Greene, Clay and Vigo counties.

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Romance of canals survives the years

1st AUG 7 1983

By Dorothy J. Clark

Most canal enthusiasts, those persons with special interests in historic canals and their preservation, belong to the American Canal Society organized in 1972 in York, Pa. Heaviest concentration of membership is in the northeastern United States. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Chesapeake and Ohio, Delaware, and Hudson are members as well as British Waterways.

Long-forgotten canals in the U.S. and Canada are always of interest to true canal buffs. A boat ride on the Rideau Locks portion of the Rideau Waterway at Jones Fall, Ontario, is an interesting trip.

Good water for canals is something hard to come by in these times of pollution and the Canal Society believes that treated waste water is better for a canal than polluted river water.

Many of the canals of the world depend on the rivers they parallel. Many of the rivers are polluted...and so are the canals

Historical society

which receive their water from them. The Potomac is certainly one of the polluted rivers and is likely to remain one for some time.

The Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, which receives its water from the Potomac River is likewise polluted, with signs along its route warning of bodily contact with canal water. Plans are now being made to use advanced waste treatment effluent from a sewage treatment plant to be constructed in Montgomery County to water the C & O Canal.

An intelligent canal lover would prefer to have clean water in his canal than polluted water. It's hoped this will serve as a model for other communities.

The Delaware & Raritan Canal in New Jersey is unique because it is one of the few remaining historic canals of the U.S. which is intact, watered and used. Threatened with being closed in with infringement and development, it will take action by the New Jersey legislature to assure its continued existence.

Citizen groups are at work on the Erie Canal in New York, on the Illinois & Michigan Canal in Illinois, and on the James River & Kenawha Canal in Virginia, on the Cumberland & Oxford Canal in Maine, and so on.

It took 17 years of concerted citizen action to create the first national canal park, the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park, linking Washington, D.C. and Cumberland, Md.

Through the years, excursions on mules-or-horse-drawn boats occasionally were arranged, but the regularly scheduled passenger service on the canals provided by the horse-drawn packet boats lasted only a few years. The canal was no match for the railroad in getting passengers to their destinations expediently.

Some of the eastern canals eventually became an attraction for pleasure boaters and wealthy yacht owners who were frequent users of the canals in later years.

Something new in the historical publishing field are reproductions of rare old documents, maps, books, drawings and other artifacts dealing with early transportation history, with emphasis on canals.

"Old Wabash & Erie Canal in Carroll County" written by Dora Thomas Mayhill in 1953 was reprinted in 1973. This well-illustrated excellent text of 100 pages covers the history of the river and canal transportation in Indiana from Indian times. The price is \$5.00.

Another booklet, "Low Bridge and Locks Ahead on the Whitewater Canal," by Milford Anness tells of the truly colorful era of Indiana history, the period when packet boats plied the gently moving waters of the early canals. The booklet at 65 cents is a "trip into yesterday," the story of one of the Hoosier canals.

Harry Sinclair Drago's book "Canal Days in America" tells the history and romance of old towpaths and waterways. Containing 352 pages and over 150 illustrations in hardcover and indexed, the \$10 book describes the 4,000 mile network of canals built following the War of 1812.

The reprint of Mitchell's "Compendium of Canals and Railroads" first published in 1835, provides complete description and data on existing canals and railroads in the 26 states, Wisconsin Territory and

Canada just as they were at the time of an extensive survey by Mitchell & Hinman of Philadelphia in 1835. The faithful facsimile of the rare 84-page handbook sells for \$2.95.

Information on the Wabash & Erie Canal as it passed through Terre Haute can be researched at the Vigo County Public Library. Evidences of the old canal can be seen at the Elks Club north of the city, the canal locks near Riley, Ind., and another area on the Springhill Road.

Canal buffs include the locations mentioned above on their vacation trips to the eastern part of the U.S. and abroad.

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Water
dispute
bred
Cross Cut
conflicts

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Community Affairs File

Community Affairs File
reservoir vandalism

15 AUG 18 1993

Real trouble came to the Wabash & Erie Canal in 1854 when Clay County residents near The Cross Cut — which connected Terre Haute to Toledo, Ohio, from roughly 1851 to 1861 — objected to their land being inundated with water.

The water created an unhealthy condition, a breeding place for mosquitoes which spread malaria — although the cause of the disease was still unknown at that time. The early settlers believed the rotting tree stumps and vegetation caused a fever to rise from the stagnant water and caused the illness of that day. The people still resented not being paid for the timber cut off their land.

Oct. 19, 1854, Governor Wright issued a proclamation and offered a \$500 reward for the arrest of anyone caught "attempting to damage or destroy the Wabash & Erie Canal by firing the weirs, locks, dams and other combustible works, cutting the embankments, etc."

This did not stop the trouble, which became more serious in the spring and summer of 1855. On May 10, about 100 men cut the embankment of Birch Creek Reservoir so completely that most of the water was let out. These armed men, disguised with blackened faces, were properly led by a drum and fife corps carrying the Stars and Stripes. The guards who had been stationed there for some time were driven off at gunpoint.

One of the canal trustees, Thomas Dowling of Terre Haute, reported to the governor that navigation was suspended on the canal south of Terre Haute for three months, causing financial loss in repairs and to those having capital invested in boats and produce. Although the repairs were made promptly, no rain fell to fill the reservoir, and the water level in the canal remained too low for boat traffic until the fall rains set in.

Wright ordered two militia companies sent to the trouble spot. Young single men enlisted for a dollar a day under the command of Vanderburgh County Sheriff John S. Gavell.

Sometime in June 1855 the militia arrived at the Junction where it was divided into two groups. About 15 men remained camped there to protect the lower reservoir, while about 50 men marched on up to Birch Creek where they occupied two old canal boats.

They spent most of their time fishing, chasing ducks, playing cards and shooting at a mark with the Clay Countians. Observing the Clay County riflemen knock a dime out of a forked stick at a distance of 20 paces at every shot, militiamen were in no hurry to get involved in a shooting fracas. They figured getting shot at was worth more than a dollar a day.

About 10 days later the militia were evacuated and sent to Terre Haute where they were "ap-

Clark Dorothy

Historically speaking



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By Dorothy Clark
Special to The Tribune-Star

propriately banqueted, and under the influence of champagne, became patriotic, made speeches and recited all their deeds of valor."

Whether right or wrong, the people of Clay County believed the feeder dams to be nuisances, which they had the right to abate in self-protection. A subsequent decision of the Supreme Court on the controversy almost justified them in cutting the banks.

The troubles and litigation, coupled with the rapid construction and operation of the railroads, led to the neglect and gradual decay of the canal interests. A few years later the Canal Co. abandoned interest in Clay County.

Paul Fatout in his book "Indiana Canals" writes, "A detached observer can only puzzle over the strange spectacle of supposedly law-abiding citizens, including this time at least one member of the state assembly, taking the law into their own hands, advocating disorder and, obstinately rejecting compromise, deliberately injuring their neighbors and themselves."

Telling how the lower line of the canal "suffered from the anarchy of nature and of man, divisions above Terre Haute were also more disturbed than serene. Grass grew so lushly that two marine mowers with 12 scythes could scarcely keep it down. Like a householder's lawn, the canal had to be shorn half a dozen times a summer. Once cut, the stuff created a new problem by lodging in lock gates, preventing their fitting tightly and causing a leakage of water, of which there was seldom an ample supply for both shippers and mill owners."

The so-called Clay County "Regulators" were just one blight on the Wabash & Erie Canal's prospects. In 1857 the rebels cut the bank at Eel River. Below Terre Haute bushes and briers clogged the unused towpath, which for weeks on end showed never a hoofprint of a towing mule. The next year was worse, and the Clay County Regulators dismantled the Birch Creek Aqueduct and managed to stop what little traffic there was. Two years later Dowling farmed out portions of the canal to responsible parties, and the slow death of the canal took place between 1860 and 1874. The land was finally sold at auction, and railroads took over the canal bed and towpaths.

'Stump speech' central to canal issue

Back in 1831 the burning question was: "Should the State of Indiana accept the grant of land donated by Congress for the construction of the Wabash & Erie Canal from Lake Erie to the mouth of the Tippecanoe River?"

Wherever a crowd gathered, a debate on this question soon was going full tilt. Outdoors a fence rail would be slipped into a worm fence. A wash tub turned bottom up was placed upon it and the neighboring rails about five feet above ground.

Debaters used this improvised platform as a rostrum from which to deliver a so-called "stump speech." Back in the early, ground-clearing days of Indiana, politicians stood atop large tree stumps to deliver their orations.

As the men gathered around the speaker, the whiskey jug and bucket of water were passed around with the community tin cup. This custom either made the speech-making more enjoyable for the audience, or it made them oblivious of the issues being discussed.

I'm convinced that Hoosiers were more concerned with the issues of the day, were more interested in the qualifications of the candidates and exercised their voting franchise more faithfully in the early days of Indiana than their descendants do now.

Historically speaking



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Back in 1888, Col. Dick Thompson spoke to a crowded house at Dowling Hall in Terre Haute. The streets near Sixth and Main were packed with people. Every seat was filled in the hall when the escort arrived with the speaker.

Nearly 400 railway employees took part in the enthusiastic reception. They had just completed organization of their Harrison Club and were backing Benjamin Harrison all the way.

When an invitation to take seats on the platform was extended to the veterans who had voted for William Henry Harrison in 1836 and 1840, about a dozen responded, including Capt. Hook, Mr. Lee, Mr. Murphy and Mr. Knapp. They were

heartily cheered as they ascended the stage. These old men had voted for W. H. Harrison whose grandson, Benjamin Harrison, now was running for office against Grover Cleveland.

Tariff was the main issue in this presidential election year. Although Cleveland got 100,000 more popular votes, Harrison won by an electoral vote of 233 to 168.

Col. Thompson's speech was a lengthy discussion of the tariff issue, the laws of past years, and his personal reminiscences of his years as congressman and Secretary of the Navy in President Hayes' cabinet.

Recalling an incident of 1840, Col. Thompson told the audience that in those pioneer days mail facilities were limited. The time the electoral college was to meet in December had been miscalculated.

When Thompson arrived home on a Tuesday afternoon, he found a letter from the Governor of Indiana informing him that the electoral college was to meet the next day, Wednesday, at Indianapolis to vote for president.

It was terrible, cold weather. He was 75 miles from Indianapolis, and the electoral college was to meet at 10 the next morning. There were no railroads as yet. He ate dinner, had his horse fed, got into

the saddle and rode all night, arriving in Indianapolis just in time to vote for Harrison for president.

"That was the way we did business in those days," Thompson said. He urged his audience to go into the election of Benjamin Harrison with the same spirit. It is easy to see why Col. Thompson was such a popular orator.

Voter apathy was unknown in those days. Today candidates work just as hard. They visit the homes of all precinct committee men and women and those of their vice committee men and women.

Candidates attend all political and social functions in order to meet as many of the voters as they can. They pass out printed material and post placards wherever it's allowed.

Candidates must be in good health, have strong stomachs, good digestion, thick skins, and a sense of humor, tireless feet, and a well-callused right hand.

The days of stump speeches, long horseback rides, and hour-long debates are things of the past. Modern-day politics is arduous enough with television coverage boring the apathetic voters into a complete aversion to going to the poles and voting.

Community Affairs File

Triumphant passage

Canal hotly debated before legislators finally approved

T. MAY 06 1998
The longest canal in the world, the Wabash & Erie Canal, took up a great deal of the time of early Hoosier legislators.

In Indiana in 1817, there was not a single railroad nor a canal west of the Alleghenies. The telegraph had not been discovered. Fire was struck by flint and steel, and the falling spark caught in "punk" taken from the knots of hickory trees.

There was not a foot of turnpike road in the new state, and plank roads had never been heard of. There were no roads west of Whitewater, and not a bridge in the whole state.

Traveling was all done on horseback with the man mounted before on the saddle, with from one to three children, the youngest in his arms, and his wife seated behind him with a spread cover reaching to the horse's tail, holding the rest of the children too little to walk.

In 1822, the seat of Indiana government was located at Corydon. The House of Representatives was composed mostly of new members and was said to be the greenest ever convened in the state. The six-week session adjourned after doing less harm than any subsequent legislature.

A few measures bear mentioning. The poll-tax system was established, and representation was given to "the new purchase," to strengthen the middle and northern parts of Indiana.

Historically speaking



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The act removing the seat of government from Corydon to Indianapolis was hotly contested, debated for weeks, and finally passed by a very close vote.

By 1826, stump speaking was just coming into fashion, and the story was told of the politician electioneering in favor of the tariff. Few people knew the meaning of the word let alone what it might change.

What they heard was decidedly against it. One old fellow said he had never seen one, but, he believed, "It was hard on sheep." The tariff of 1828 raised the duty on molasses 10 cents per gallon, an increase of 100 percent!

Early legislators spent a lot of time on the Wabash & Erie Canal bill. European bond holders were rapidly gaining possession of the canal.

The bill had been engrossed, and

was to come up the next day for final passage. The House and galleries were packed. The aisles were filled with ladies, and the doors and windows opened to give fresh air to the suffocating audience.

Since this was the third reading, the question was, "Shall the bill pass?" Colonel David Wallace, of the most eloquent men in the Senate, spoke first in favor of the bill.

His brother-in-law, a man named Rariden, leader of the opposition, delivered a powerful common-sense speech. When he took his seat the prospect looked dim for the bill's passage.

Then Colonel John McNairy, the chosen orator of the Wabash Valley and known supporter of the canal bill, delivered one of the brief speeches for which he was famous.

The tall and commanding figure raised himself on tip-toe, and in a clear voice said, "Mr. Speaker, our population on the Wabash am great, but our resources for salt am slim. Salt! Them can not migrate up the Wabash!"

The colonel took his seat with great applause from the benches. No one asked for the floor to reply. The question was put, and the bill passed by a triumphant majority. Cannon boomed, bells rang, the city was illuminated, and all was joy and hilarity at Indianapolis for weeks afterward.

And so the Wabash & Erie Canal, one of the most important

phases in Indiana history, came into being. Hoosiers were so busy with their own expansion and growth they were not aware of what was happening in the rest of the United States except as it affected them.

The story of the canal is a long and involved listing of factions working against each other, sections being completed on time and other sections holding up the progress. The political situation didn't help. Even the lowly mosquito got into the act before people knew it was causing the "low water fever," and what was considered unhealthy conditions along the canal route.

By the time the canal was considered completed, only sections of it were really reliable for transportation of freight and passengers. All the time the canal was being built, the railroads also were being built, and would prove more reliable, faster, and less costly.

The cannon did not boom when the canal began to shut down and creditors ran around trying to make up their losses. No bells rang, and people along the railroad tracks enjoyed watching the little "puffer bellies" come down the track more than they enjoyed the majestic movement of the canal boats pulled by their plodding horse power along the tow paths.

Indiana had reached another era of transportation and growth.

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Assembly authorized canal in 1836

A failure, waterway still played key role in transportation

DEC 15 1981
To aid in connecting the navigable waters of the Maumee and the Wabash rivers, Congress granted to the state of Indiana in 1827 a strip of land one-half of five sections wide on either side of the proposed Wabash & Erie Canal.

Spurred by the upper Wabash settlers who were handicapped by their lack of transportation, the Legislature accepted the grant from the federal government and agreed to build the canal.

This stupendous piece of engineering was authorized by a bill passed by the Legislature in 1836, when transportation was mandatory. The Wabash & Erie Canal followed rivers, going upstream on one, across country to the headwaters of another, and then downstream.

A board of three canal commissioners was appointed and instructed to employ engineers, locate the canal route, select land, lay off town sites, and work out a system of financing the job.

Indiana's unreadiness for such a project should have been painfully evident because the previous year's state tax levy had brought in only \$33,000, which barely covered running expenses.

But the citizens cared little about that. Ohio, New York and everybody else were building successful canals. Why couldn't Indiana?

The newspapers deluged the

Historically speaking



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public with articles on railroads and canals, and Indiana, poor as the proverbial church mouse, was determined to see the job through.

Excavation for the canal was done by hand shovelers mostly using one-horse, two-wheeled dump carts. In 1834, a thousand men were working on the Wabash & Erie Canal, mostly westward from Fort Wayne. These laborers were mostly Irish, divided as usual with equal numbers of Corkonians and Ulstermen.

The freight rate by canal boat from Toledo, Ohio, to Evansville was \$5 a ton, but the tolls were still insufficient to pay repair bills. Two- or 3-year-old wooden aqueducts already were decaying.

The longest part of the canal followed the Wabash and passed through Fort Wayne, Logansport, Lafayette and Covington, then south to Terre Haute. From here it

swung eastward to Worthington and Petersburg, and then on to its termination at Evansville.

In 1849, the first boats reached Terre Haute. This was an unfortunate season: first there was a flood, then an epidemic of cholera broke up construction gangs.

Canal boats were pulled by horses, with teams changed four times in 24 hours. Boats made 100 miles a day. It was a constant struggle to maintain a semblance of service, and freight delivery by this route was unreliable.

Evansville merchants complained that frequently they had to send teams and wagons up to some lonely spot along the route where the canal boat was stranded, in order to obtain a shipment of goods.

The Wabash & Erie Canal was never on a paying basis and never able to deliver satisfactory service. The year after its completion, in 1853, railroads began to operate. They gave so much better service that the backers of the canal lost their enthusiasm.

In 1857, trustees ordered any portion of the canal not paying expenses to be closed. All that portion below Terre Haute was closed immediately. By 1859 it was abandoned and only short local sections were in use for a few more years.

The canal was offered for lease to anyone who would keep it in repair

for its use, and the last portion closed forever in 1860.

The Wabash & Erie Canal would appear to have been the most colossal, the most tragic failure in all canal history, but pitiful as it was, it played a tremendous part in the making of Indiana and the Midwest.

The 96-miles of the Illinois & Michigan Canal, connecting the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River system, brought vast quantities of grain and livestock to Chicago, and delivered heavy freight and supplies on the return trip.

This canal, which was put into operation in 1848, the same year the telegraph reached Chicago, started from the southern branch of the Chicago River and went across country, via the DesPlaines, mostly alongside the Illinois River, to the head of navigation at Peru.

The idea for it came from the fact Indians and early voyagers had portaged across from the Chicago River to the headwaters of the Illinois, making almost a continuous waterway from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

Construction of the canal, projected in 1827, and finally finished in 1848, cost \$6,170,226. In its 96 miles from the Illinois River at Peru to the level of Lake Michigan, there was a rise of 145 feet, requiring 17 locks.

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Community Affairs File

Canal meandered through town

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★ Clark, Dorothy

Historically speaking



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Special to The Tribune-Star

July 4, 1835. The canal was extended from the Tippecanoe River to Terre Haute in 1836 and 1837.

Canal Street is the only visible reminder of the Wabash & Erie Canal in Terre Haute. It was, for a brief time, a great factor in the growth and commerce of this city as well as the state.

Meandering through the city from its entrance at the extreme northwest to its exit at the farthest southeast, the canal was once a busy thoroughfare. Stationary bridges and swinging bridges crossed it at street intersections. Around the canal basin where the boats docked and discharged and received freight was the busiest center of commerce in Terre Haute during the 1850s.

Modern progress, including better roadways and railroads, advanced so rapidly that the canal was obsolete almost before it was completed. The people, as usual, talked the project to death.

Entering Terre Haute from

the north, close to the Wabash River, the Wabash & Erie Canal came close to the river's edge at Locust Street and followed it to Sycamore Street. The river now covers the canal bed in that area.

The canal passed close to the west line of the Old Indian Orchard Burying Ground, and swept around the high ground once the site of the rebuilt Hudson Hominy Mill, to enter the turning basin that extended from the river bank to First Street.

A narrow stream across First connected this basin with the upper basin that extended nearly to Second Street. Another narrow basin extended at right angles to the north for about a block, forming a dock and harbor for the canal boats.

From the upper basin, the canal turned to the north, climbing the hill, as it were, by the locks near the northeast corner of Second and Chestnut streets.

The boat entered the lower lock, in which water flowed to raise it to the upper lock, an ascent of about 15 feet. The canal proceeded north to Canal Street, west of Second, and turning east followed to Seventh Street on what became the right of way of the Vandalia Roadroad. It curved to the south along what is now 9½ Street to Poplar, where it inclined to the southeast on its way to Lockport (now Riley), then on to the reservoir and on to Evansville.

The canal was crossed at

First, Chestnut, Third, Fourth, Lafayette Road, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh streets, Wabash and Poplar streets, by wooden bridges, high enough to allow the canal boats to pass under, with the exception of a low bridge, nearly on street level, at Lafayette, that swung on a pivot.

Canal days were colorful and exciting at times. In the 1850s when it was the only means of transportation to and from the north, the arrival of the packets was an interesting sight. People flocked to see them come in, as they went later to the railroad station. One or two of the town's omnibuses made the boat arrivals regularly.

The first signal of arrival was the pleasing strains from the canal boat's long horn. Then the three-horse tandem team would appear from behind the little elevation at the curve, trotting their best to give a good motion to the packet, which then was in sight, its deck covered with passengers.

At that moment, the long tow-rope was cast loose, and the boat would float under its own headway diagonally across the basin to the old Britton warehouse, that was its landing place and pier.

Those who recalled those days believed the sweetest music ever heard was that produced by the boatmen on the long horns as they approached town or signaled the lock tenders.

To be continued next week.

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Canal packet afforded pleasant travel

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Continuing the saga of the Wabash & Erie Canal.

Traveling by canal packet was pleasant and picturesque. Travelers neither knew great speed or wanted to experience today's frantic traveling. During the days spent on deck of the smoothly gliding packets, new friendships happened, games were played, music enjoyed, and even romances begun.

The best packets made eight miles an hour, and the driver kept his tandem team of three on a sharp trot, changing the horses often along the route. As towns were approached, the mellow notes from the horn announced arrival. If it was a way station, passengers could alight and seek out refreshments at the local tavern, tarrying until the warning horn sounded all aboard.

The canal offered a closeup view of the countryside that later was advertised as one of the charms of travel by automobile and interurban. It wound through farms, fields, meadows, through long stretches of dense forest, affording views of hills and valleys and far-stretching prairies.

The government recognized the value of the route by the Wabash and Maumee by securing the portage between the two rivers in the Ordinance of 1787 as a common highway free from any tax or duty, making it a national roadway.

It was the middle of the 19th century before Terre Haute witnessed the completion of the Wabash & Erie Canal, but the ideas at the foundation of such improvements date back to the confederated colonies. Washington suggested a canal to connect

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Lake Erie and the Potomac in 1784. He prophesied the connection of Lake Erie with the Mississippi River.

The original plan of making the terminus of the Wabash & Erie Canal at Terre Haute soon was discouraged, because the Wabash River was not navigable at all seasons of the year up to this point.

The decreasing volume of the Indiana rivers caused by the removal of the forests and the breaking of the soil and subsoil drainage, causing the rapid drainage of rainfall, already was observed by 1830 and 1840.

Indiana began plunging into the improvements by starting all of the schemes at once. Public confidence was high, and the market was flooded with bonds. The price of labor, provisions and material exceeded estimates. Most of the bonds were sold on credit.

With the series of failures that marked the Panic of 1837, the Morris Canal & Banking Co. of New York, holders of a large portion of the canal bonds, went into bankruptcy, owing the state more than \$2 million for bonds it

had purchased on credit.

Altogether, the state lost more than \$3 million for bonds sold on credit. The canal had been completed as far as Logansport in 1838, but in the following year the whole system of public improvements was paralyzed. Efforts to complete the work were suspended.

In 1840 the state debt was more than \$13 million, of which more than \$9 million was for internal improvements. Only 202 miles of canal and two short railroad lines, yielding altogether an income of \$31,000 annually, were actually completed at that time.

Interest-bearing notes were issued for a \$1.5 million to meet the balances due contractors. In the following year, an issue of bonds could not be sold. Land scrip and treasury notes were issued, receivable for canal tolls and water rents on the Wabash & Erie Canal, and many expedients were tried and failed.

Some of the work was abandoned, some was sold to private companies, but the Wabash & Erie remained a state enterprise until its completion. In 1843, the canal as far as Lafayette was earning \$60,000 a year. The following year a disastrous flood closed it to general use, and it never became a profitable route.

In this period of embarrassment that affected other states as well as Indiana, there was a demand that the payment of interest be stopped, and that the debt resulting from bonds sold on credit, and for which the state never received payment, should be repudiated.

Repudiation became the point

over which the fiercest political and economic controversy of that period was waged. Settlement began in Michigan in 1842.

The matter was settled by Indiana in Terre Haute in 1845. State credit was strengthened, and the stigma of repudiation and financial dishonor was forever removed. The canal was placed in the hands of Charles Butler and Thomas H. Blake, and they took possession on July 1, 1847, with offices at Terre Haute.

Jesse Williams of Fort Wayne was chief engineer, and W.J. Ball of Terre Haute was resident engineer. The canal was opened to Evansville in the spring of 1853, for a total of 458 miles. It had been completed to Covington in 1845, to Coal Creek in 1847, and to Terre Haute in 1849.

The first line boat arrived in Terre Haute in June 1850, carrying canal officials and prominent citizens who celebrated the occasion.

The most prosperous years of the canal were 1847-56. Tolls and rents during the best year, 1852, were \$193,400, but declined steadily. By 1874, income fell to \$7,179 due to railroad competition.

In 1858, holders of canal certificates petitioned to abandon the canal south of Terre Haute and sell canal lands. During 1859-60, a part of the canal still was operated by private parties. By 1862, it was closed south from Terre Haute.

The canal closed in 1874 and rapidly fell into complete ruin. A fiscal summary shows a loss of \$3 million.

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